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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents eight competencies approved by the American School Counselor Association and the Association for Assessment in Counseling that provide the knowledge and skills school counselors need in the areas of assessment and evaluation. Because effectiveness in assessment and evaluation is critical to effective counseling, these competencies are important for school counselor education and practice. Although consistent with existing Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) standards, they focus on competencies of individual counselors rather than content of counselor education programs. Counselor and assessment educators can use them as a guide in the development and evaluation of school counselor preparation programs, workshops, or other continuing education programs. They may also be used by school counselors to evaluate their own professional development and their need for continuing education. (JDM)

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Competencies in Assessment and Evaluation for School Counselors

By Patricia Elmore

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Chapter Eight

Competencies in Assessment and Evaluation for School Counselors

Approved by the American School Counselor Association on September 21, 1998, and by the Association for Assessment in Counseling on September 10, 1998[1]

Patricia Elmore, Chair

Abstract

The purpose of these competencies is to provide a description of the knowledge and skills that school counselors need in the areas of assessment and evaluation. Because effectiveness in assessment and evaluation is critical to effective counseling, these competencies are important for school counselor education and practice. Although consistent with existing Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) standards for preparing counselors, they focus on competencies of individual counselors rather than content of counselor-education programs.

The competencies can be used by counselor and assessment educators as a guide in the development and evaluation of school counselor preparation programs, workshops, in-services, and other continuing-education opportunities. They may also be used by school counselors to evaluate their own professional development and needs for continuing education.

School counselors should meet each of the nine numbered competencies and have the specific skills listed under each competency.

Competency 1. *School counselors are skilled in choosing assessment strategies.*

a. They can describe the nature and use of different types of formal and informal assessments, including questionnaires, checklists, interviews, inventories, tests, observations, surveys, and performance assessments, and work with

individuals skilled in clinical assessment.

b. They can specify the types of information most readily obtained from different assessment approaches.

c. They are familiar with resources for critically evaluating each type of assessment and can use them in choosing appropriate assessment strategies.

d. They are able to advise and assist others (e.g., a school district) in choosing appropriate assessment strategies.

Competency 2. *School counselors can identify, access, and evaluate the most commonly used assessment instruments.*

a. They know which assessment instruments are most commonly used in school settings to assess intelligence, aptitude, achievement, personality, work values, and interests, including computer-assisted versions and other alternate formats.

b. They know the dimensions along which assessment instruments should be evaluated, including purpose, validity, utility, norms, reliability and measurement error, score reporting method, and consequences of use.

c. They can obtain and evaluate information about the quality of those assessment instruments.

Competency 3. *School counselors are skilled in the techniques of administration and methods of scoring assessment instruments.*

a. They can implement appropriate administration procedures, including administration using computers.

b. They can standardize administration of assessments when interpretation is in relation to external norms.

c. They can modify administration of assessments to accommodate individual differences consistent with publisher recommendations and current statements of professional practice.

d. They can provide consultation, information, and training to others who assist with administration and scoring.

e. They know when it is necessary to obtain informed consent from parents or guardians before administering an assessment.

Competency 4. *School counselors are skilled in interpreting and reporting assessment results.*

a. They can explain scores that are commonly reported, such as percentile ranks, standard scores, and grade equivalents. They can interpret a confidence interval for an individual score based on a standard error of measurement.

b. They can evaluate the appropriateness of a norm group when interpreting the scores of an individual or a group.

c. They are skilled in communicating assessment information to others, including teachers, administrators, students, parents, and the community. They are aware of the rights students and parents have to know assessment results and decisions made as a consequence of any assessment.

d. They can evaluate their own strengths and limitations in the use of assessment instruments and in assessing students with disabilities or linguistic or cultural differences. They know how to identify professionals with appropriate training and experience for consultation.

e. They know the legal and ethical principles about confidentiality and disclosure of assessment information and recognize the need to abide by district policy on retention and use of assessment information.

Competency 5. *School counselors are skilled in using assessment results in decision making.*

a. They recognize the limitations of using a single score in making an educational decision and know how to obtain multiple sources of information to improve such decisions.

b. They can evaluate their own expertise for making decisions based on assessment results. They also can evaluate the limitations of conclusions provided by others, including the reliability and validity of computer-assisted assessment interpretations.

c. They can evaluate whether the available evidence is adequate to support the intended use of an assessment result for decision making, particularly when that use has not been recommended by the developer of the assessment instrument.

d. They can evaluate the rationale underlying the use of qualifying scores for placement in educational programs or courses of study.

e. They can evaluate the consequences of assessment-related decisions and avoid actions that would have unintended negative consequences.

Competency 6. *School counselors are skilled in producing, interpreting, and presenting statistical information about assessment results.*

a. They can describe data (e.g., test scores, grades, demographic information) by forming frequency distributions, preparing tables, drawing graphs, and calculating descriptive indices of central tendency, variability, and relationship.

b. They can compare a score from an assessment instrument

with an existing distribution, describe the placement of a score within a normal distribution, and draw appropriate inferences.

c. They can interpret statistics used to describe characteristics of assessment instruments, including difficulty and discrimination indices, reliability and validity coefficients, and standard errors of measurement.

d. They can identify and interpret inferential statistics when comparing groups, making predictions, and drawing conclusions needed for educational planning and decisions.

e. They can use computers for data management, statistical analysis, and production of tables and graphs for reporting and interpreting results.

Competency 7. *School counselors are skilled in conducting and interpreting evaluations of school counseling programs and counseling-related interventions.*

a. They understand and appreciate the role that evaluation plays in the program development process throughout the life of a program.

b. They can describe the purposes of an evaluation and the types of decisions to be based on evaluation information.

c. They can evaluate the degree to which information can justify conclusions and decisions about a program.

d. They can evaluate the extent to which student outcome measures match program goals.

e. They can identify and evaluate possibilities for unintended outcomes and possible impacts of one program on other programs.

f. They can recognize potential conflicts of interest and other factors that may bias the results of evaluations.

Competency 8. *School counselors are skilled in adapting and using questionnaires, surveys, and other assessments to meet local needs.*

a. They can write specifications and questions for local assessments.

b. They can assemble an assessment into a usable format and provide directions for its use.

c. They can design and implement scoring processes and procedures for information feedback.

Competency 9. *School counselors know how to engage in professionally responsible assessment and evaluation practices.*

a. They understand how to act in accordance with ACA's *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* and ASCA's *Ethical Standards for School Counselors.*

b. They can use professional codes and standards, including the *Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education*, *Code of Professional Responsibilities in Educational Measurement*, *Responsibilities of Users of Standardized Tests*, and *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, to evaluate counseling practices using assessments.
c. They understand test fairness and can avoid the selection of biased assessment instruments and biased uses of assessment instruments. They can evaluate the potential for unfairness when tests are used incorrectly and for possible bias in the interpretation of assessment results.
d. They understand the legal and ethical principles and practices regarding test security, copying copyrighted materials, and unsupervised use of assessment instruments that are not intended for self-administration.
e. They can obtain and maintain available credentialing that demonstrates their skills in assessment and evaluation.
f. They know how to identify and participate in educational and training opportunities to maintain competence and acquire new skills in assessment and evaluation.

Definitions of Terms

Competencies describe skills or understandings that a school counselor should possess to perform assessment and evaluation activities effectively.

Assessment is the gathering of information for decision making about individuals, groups, programs, or processes. Assessment targets include abilities, achievements, personality variables, aptitudes, attitudes, preferences, interests, values, demographics, and other characteristics. Assessment procedures include but are not limited to standardized and unstandardized tests, questionnaires, inventories, checklists, observations, portfolios, performance assessments, rating scales, surveys, interviews, and other clinical measures.

Evaluation is the collection and interpretation of information to make judgments about individuals, programs, or processes that lead to decisions and future actions.

About the Committee Chair

Patricia B. Elmore is associate dean for administrative services in the College of Education and professor in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. She received her Ph.D. in 1970 in educational

psychology with a specialization in educational measurement and statistics. She is a past president of the Association for Assessment in Counseling and the 1994 recipient with Ruth B. Ekstrom and Esther E. Diamond of the American Counseling Association Research Award. Currently she is editor of *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*. She co-authored *Basic Statistics* with Paula L. Woehlke (Addison Wesley Longman, 1997) and has published in *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *Educational Researcher*, *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, *Journal of Educational Measurement*, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, and *The School Counselor*, among other journals.

1. A joint committee of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and the Association for Assessment in Counseling (AAC) was appointed by the respective presidents in 1993 with the charge to draft a statement about school counselor preparation in assessment and evaluation. Committee members were Ruth Ekstrom (AAC), Patricia Elmore (AAC, Chair, 1997–1999), Daren Hutchinson (ASCA), Marjorie Mastie (AAC), Kathy O'Rourke (ASCA), William Schafer (AAC, Chair, 1993–1997), Thomas Trotter (ASCA), and Barbara Webster (ASCA).